

News Release

“Up for Discussion” begins Thursday, Feb. 15 and runs through March 8, 2007

By Linda Kingery, Gary Holthhaus on Thursday, February 1, 2007

(Crookston, Minn., February 1, 2007)- “Up for Discussion,” a conversation for folks who like to read, will begin in the Fosston and Ada Public Libraries on Thursday, February 15. The discussion series will run for four Thursdays. “Each week will focus on a stimulating text that will trigger lively conversation,” according to Linda Kingery, Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, one of the project's sponsors. The project is co-sponsored by the Fosston and Ada Public Libraries, the University of Minnesota's School of Agriculture Endowed Chair for Agricultural Systems, and the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society (NPSAS).

The readings and the conversations are all free and open to the public. They will be held in two sessions on each Thursday, from February 15 through March 8. One session will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the library in Fosston to accommodate families that have morning and evening chores. The other will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the library in Ada, for those who have business hours to keep. There will be coffee and refreshments at each session.

Gary Holthaus of LaMoure, North Dakota, administrative director of NPSAS, will lead the discussions. “We have picked some challenging and interesting texts,” Holthaus said, “but they make good reading, and will offer some thought-provoking ideas.” The texts are brief and include “A Banquet of Consequences,” an essay in The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies, a book by Richard Heinberg. “Agriculture,” a section from Home Ground: Essays on Ecology by Stan Rowe, a noted Canadian ecologist, will guide another discussion. “The WTO, NAFTA, CAFTA, and the FTAA,” a chapter from a new book by Holthaus titled, From the Farm to the Table: What All Americans Need to Know about Agriculture, looks at the impact of free trade and globalization on local economies. Finally, a chapter from Sustaining the Common Good, by John B. Cobb Jr., and the executive summary of a study of local food systems by Ken Meter, Finding Food in Farm Country: Northwest Minnesota, will conclude the series.

According to Holthaus “These documents are all related to our concerns about agriculture, food, the economy, and the environment. They raise important questions about what is often called, ‘The New Agrarianism.’ and though they are from widely different perspectives, they all have something to teach us.” Kingery says, “For those who worry about what is happening to our agriculture and food systems, these readings and conversations will provide some new information and new perspectives. We do not expect everyone to agree with everything in these readings. We do expect people to read them before they come, and to come with a point a view, ready to listen and to talk.”

Free photocopies of the texts can be picked up at the Fosston and Ada Public Libraries Monday through Saturday. They will be available after February 5. You can receive copies via email or snail mail by writing the libraries or by contacting Gary Holthaus at P.O. Box 3 LaMoure, ND 58458, or calling NPSAS at 701-883-4304.

“Up for Discussion” is made possible in part with funding from the University of Minnesota School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems managed by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), the UM Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Fosston and Ada Public Libraries, and Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society. “Our purpose is to contribute to a growing conversation about the role of agriculture in our economy, its impact on our environment, and our sense of community,” says Kingery. Holthaus adds that “Like the Partnership and MISA, the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society is committed to the development of a more sustainable society through the promotion of ecologically sound, socially just, and economically viable food systems. We believe conversations like these, scattered across the northern plains so many people can have access to them, are essential to achieving our goals and maintaining our democracy.”

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